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TRIBAL CONSULTATION ANNUAL REPORT
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Agency Overview

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) is the single state administered Veteran services agency with the overarching vision of ensuring Arizona Veterans, service members and their families have no barriers to benefits and services they've earned. The department advocates for the military and Veteran community and provides them the following services: skilled-nursing care, preparation and submission of claims for compensation and pension benefits to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, burial benefits, approval of GI Bill funding for educational institutions, as well as the administration of state and federal grant funding and initiatives that address Veteran homelessness, employment, education, financial assistance and suicide prevention.

Tribal Consultation Activities

Goal	Objective	Activity and Performance Measure
Identify and seek input from appropriate Native American governing bodies, community groups and individuals as a necessary and integral part of the agency's decision-making process	Understand the specific needs and barriers of American Indian Women Veterans	ADVS co-hosted the Native American Women Veteran's Roundtable with about 20 Veterans who discussed needs and barriers they face on reservations.
Identify and seek input from appropriate Native American governing bodies, community groups and individuals as a necessary and integral part of the agency's decision-making process	Address the needs and barriers of American Indian Veterans	ADVS launched a Minority Veteran's Committee with the goal of eliminating barriers to accessing services for minority Veterans. Three tribal representatives are on the committee.
Identify and seek input from appropriate Native American governing bodies, community groups and individuals as a necessary and integral part of the agency's decision-making process	Gather information directly from Veterans regarding their needs and experiences with transportation	ADVS conducted a transportation study, collecting Veteran's experiences through a survey and focus group. Feedback from tribal representatives will be included in the final report.
Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Submit claims for VA compensation, pension and other service-connected benefits	ADVS participated in the VA Virtual Experience Action Center, filing claims virtually and over the phone. ADVS served about 40 tribal Veterans over three days.

Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Submit claims for VA compensation, pension and other service-connected benefits	ADVS began working with tribal representatives to set up itinerate offices on reservations to submit claims for Veterans. ADVS is in the final stages of finalizing a memorandum of understanding with a location on Navajo Nation to conduct on-site claims.
Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Address the needs and barriers of American Indian Veterans	ADVS continues to attend Project ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations) meetings in efforts to add a station on Navajo Nation. This will allow Veterans to virtually receive VA healthcare, Board of Veterans Appeals hearings and Veteran Benefits Counselor meetings to obtain federal and state benefits without leaving the reservation.
Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Communicate the services provided by the state to tribal Veterans	ADVS began running public service announcements regarding state Veteran services on tribal radio stations.
Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Submit claims for VA compensation, pension and other service-connected benefits	ADVS staffed Veteran Treatment Courts, serving about 20 justice-involved tribal Veterans.
Provide outreach and direct services to American Indian Veterans living on reservations and in rural communities	Address the needs and barriers of American Indian Veterans	ADVS awarded \$10,000 in grant funds to organizations serving tribal Veterans.

Highlights:

- Maximizing technology:** Through the COVID-19 pandemic, ADVS has continued to work with tribal Veterans Affairs departments, ensuring ongoing direct services and support to American Indian Veterans and their families. In 2017, ADVS piloted a program with Hopi Veterans Services to conduct virtual or phone appointments with a Veteran Benefits Counselor (VBC) without leaving the reservation. In FY 21, the program rolled out statewide, creating easier access to services during the pandemic. ADVS increased exposure for these services by participating in the VA Virtual Experience Action Center, filing claims virtually and over the phone. ADVS outreached to tribal representatives to engage with Veterans before and after the three-day event to handle benefits claims virtually. This allowed ADVS to not only serve about 40 Veterans, but it also increased awareness for the availability of services.

- **Reaching tribal women Veterans:** In efforts to understand and address the specific needs and barriers of American Indian Women Veterans, ADVS co-hosted a roundtable with about 20 Veterans who discussed needs and barriers they face on reservations. ADVS also participated in the first Navajo Women Veterans Day Conference in Window Rock and spoke to attendees about available services and benefits offered by the state. Through these efforts, ADVS was able to discuss problems and possible solutions for eliminating service barriers for tribal women Veterans. The conversations will continue into the future and affect ongoing initiatives.

Revisions to Tribal Consultation Policy: As of April 2021, the ADVS tribal liaison is the Assistant Deputy Director – Public and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Challenges: COVID-19 restricted in-person contact between tribal Veterans and ADVS for all of FY 21. ADVS has worked to overcome this challenge by working closely with tribal Veterans Affairs departments to use available technology to eliminate service barriers. ADVS has also increased its capacity for virtual and telephonic outreach and appointments.

For questions or more information, please contact:

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